

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01
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R 100945Z MAR 78
FM AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9100
INFO AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL UDORN
CINCPAC

C O N F I D E N T I A L VIENTIANE 0325

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: EAIR PBOR PEPR PDIP LA VM TH
SUBJECT: LPDR INCREASES AIR FLIGHTS TO BANGKOK AND HANOI; REPORT
THAT LAO MAY CLOSE THADEUA RIVER CROSSING
TO FOREIGNERS

REF: VIENTIANE 0321

BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED

1. THE LPDR MINISTRY OF INFORMATION DAILY BULLETIN
REPORTED MARCH 7 THAT LAO AVIATION WOULD ADD ONE EXTRA
WEEKLY FLIGHT BOTH TO THE HANOI AND BANGKOK ROUTES.
LAO AVIATION ANNOUNCED THAT FOR THE NEXT FOUR THURSDAYS
STARTING MARCH 16 IT WOULD FLY TO HANOI DEPARTING
VIENTIANE 0800 ARRIVING HANOI 0900 AND DEPARTING HANOI
1030 ARRIVING VIENTIANE 1200. THE ARTICLE REPORTED
THAT VIETNAM AIRLINES WOULD THEN FLY THE NEW ROUTE FOR
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THE FOLLOWING FOUR THURSDAYS.

2. IN A SIMILAR AGREEMENT WITH THAI AIRWAYS, LAO
AVIATION ANNOUNCED THAT FOR THE NEXT FOUR MONDAYS
STARTING APRIL 3 IT WOULD FLY TO BANGKOK DEPARTING
VIENTIANE 1400 ARRIVING BANGKOK 1530 AND DEPARTING
BANGKOK 1630 ARRIVING VIENTIANE 1800. THAI AIRWAYS

WOULD THEN TAKE THAT ROUTE FOR THE FOLLOWING FOUR MONDAYS. ONCE THIS NEW FLIGHT SCHEDULE STARTS THERE WILL BE THREE WEEKLY COMMERCIAL FLIGHTS LINKING BANGKOK AND VIENTIANE (ON MONDAYS, WEDNESDAYS AND SATURDAYS).

END UNCLASSIFIED.

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3. THE EMBASSY HAS HEARD UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT, AS OF APRIL 1, THE LAO GOVERNMENT PLANNED TO BAR THE THADEUA RIVER CROSSING POINT TO ALL FOREIGNERS. FOREIGNERS WOULD ONLY BE ABLE TO CROSS THE RIVER AT THE THANALENG CAR FERRY POINT IN THEIR OWN VEHICLES. AS IT STANDS NOW ONLY FOREIGNERS RESIDENT IN VIENTIANE ARE STILL PERMITTED TO USE THE THADEUA RIVER CROSSING POINT. THE LAO GOVERNMENT SPECIFIES ON THE VISAS OF FOREIGN TRANSITS AND TEMPORARY VISITORS THAT THEY MUST ENTER AND EXIT LAOS THROUGH WATTAY AIRPORT IN VIENTIANE.

4. COMMENT: THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT LAO GOVERNMENT REGULATIONS THAT PREVENT FOREIGNERS FROM CROSSING THE RIVER ARE PRIMARILY DESIGNED TO INCREASE THE NUMBER OF PASSENGERS ON THE LAO AVIATION FLIGHTS FROM VIENTIANE TO BANGKOK. MANY FOREIGNERS PREFER TO TAKE THE TRAIN TO BANGKOK FROM NONG KHAI AT A FRACTION OF THE COST, OR
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THE THAI AIRWAYS FLIGHT FROM UDORN TO BANGKOK AT HALF OF THE COST OF THE DIRECT VIENTIANE/BANGKOK FLIGHT. ALTHOUGH LAO AVIATION SHARES THE DIRECT VIENTIANE/BANGKOK ROUTE WITH THAI AIRWAYS, IT AT LEAST HAS A FIFTY PERCENT CHANCE OF EARNING FOREIGN EXCHANGE INCOME FROM TRAVELERS IF THEY MUST ENTER AND EXIT LAOS VIA WATTAY AIRPORT. AS REPORTED IN THE REFTEL, THE EMBASSY BELIEVES THAT THE LAO GOVERNMENT WOULD ALSO LIKE EVENTUALLY TO REDUCE THE SIZE OF THE WESTERN COMMUNITY IN VIENTIANE. THE LAO ARE THEREFORE UNLIKELY TO BE RESPONSIVE TO THE CHARGE THAT TRAVEL RESTRICTIONS ARE INVONVENIENT FOR THEIR FOREIGN GUESTS. END CONFIDENTIAL.
CHAMBERLIN

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